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Alissa was born on October in 1967 in Brooklyn, New York. In 1981 when she was 13 years old, her family immigrated to Israel. Alissa says that her family came with no family but they had supporting friends. Only because of the support her family received, was their aliya experience so successful. When Alissa's family made aliya, she had just finished 8th grade and was starting to attend "Pelech" high school. In "Pelech", Alissa had wonderful support when she started school. There was a large group of olim who also started when Alissa had. The principal understood the help the olim needed and did everything he could to get the olim the necessary help so they could succeed. He had given the olim help with the Hebrew grammar etc. due to the help she got when she was in school, she understood how important it is to give attention and help the olim.

Alissa is the "Efrat Olim Coordinator” and has been working with the new immigrants for six years. She is employed by the Religious Counsel of Efrat. At first it was a volunteer job, but after a while they offered her a full time paying job. She did not go through any training but she says she should have. It would have helped to go to courses but instead she met with other olim coordinators and learned from their experience about how to help the olim. In addition, she did was ask the olim what kind of programs they would like and thought were good to have.

First she meets with potential olim during their pilot trip (when they come to check the place out). Alissa helps the potential olim by telling then about Efrat, the people who live there, the housing, etc. She meets with the staff of the schools, so after that the parents can also meet with the school staff. Alissa is not allowed to recommend certain schools, but she is allowed to give an idea to the parents according to what they are looking for. If they mind girls and boys learning together then Alissa would tell them that "Aseh Chail" is not the school for them. If their child does not like the rigid, demanding and strict learning then Alissa would tell the parents that "Orot Atzion" would not be good for their child. For the high school olim there are programs that help them with high school entry exams. Alissa also assists the olim socially. She arranges play dates with children of all ages who live in Efrat. She finds families with children the same age as the oilm and arranges “buddies” so the olim are not completely lost when they arrive. There are many educational programs (learning the language, Israeli music etc.) so the olim can learn about the love of Israel (ahavat Israel) and our history. There are many trips that are organized to different places such as the sound and light show, theater and more. Those trips are to teach the olim about the Israeli culture

When the olim first arrive, they might have trouble connecting to other children, have trouble in school and other problems. For that reason, they have many support groups like “survival skills for teen olim”-the olim meet with a psychologist and talk about their adjustment issues: culturally, socially and educationally. There are also programs for the families of commuters and what issues they have when the father is not home or when he is home. The programs that they have are not just for the children, there are some

programs for parents. In some groups they help the parents learn how to budget their account in Israeli banking, teach them about the health and education system. The parents have to find time to sign certain papers, passports, the identification cards, so in August there is a summer camp for the younger children when they first arrive. They teach the children some of the games that are played in the school yard so the children would not be lost at recess when school starts.

Throughout the years, the program’s budget has grown and in every group/program there are a different amount of olim (it depends on how many olim come). This year, Alissa said that they have over 30 programs. Alissa sees that when some of the olim do not go into the programs they offer, they have a harder time adjusting. Alissa said that her biggest accomplishment was when the parents and the child told her that they no longer consider themselves as olim. When I asked Alissa how he work has affected her, she said it has enriched her life. She feels satisfied when she has had a productive day then she feels because she knows she helped someone. On the other hand, when the help she gives is not taken advantaged of or is not wanted then she says it is annoying and does not give a feeling of satisfaction. She is grateful that the parents of the olim often feel so comfortable that they invite her to their celebrations.

Alissa said she has some ideas that could advance the program. She would love to create more programs to close the gaps between the olim and the Israeli kids and the population. The olim do not totally acclimate to Israeli society, they live in a parallel sub culture of their own. She says that they are trying to put those ideas in action but so far unsuccessfully. It is not something she can do alone. It would take help from the schools, the youth counselors, and the population and society of the community. They try to explain to the parents as well as to the children how important it is to youth programs such as Bnei Akiva, the youth center etc. What would help would be if both the Israelis and he olim would want it-to take place in activities together. She gives examples of how the community (mostly the younger children) can help with the olim. She says that most of the Israelis might be intimidated by the Americans because of what they come from (larger homes, the fact that most of the kids have x boxes and wii etc.) and the Israeli feels like what they have to offer is not good enough but Alissa says that is not true! Most of the olim children would rather just kick a ball around and have a friend. What the Israelis own does not mean much to them. It is how they are treated that counts.

Alissa has a goal for the olim-“to click”. And she has a message for the Israeli and American teenagers. To the Israelis, Alissa asks them to reach out more, to be kind and patient with the olim. To the teen olim, Alissa says "hang in there". She says to speak Hebrew even if you think you might be saying it wrong because it will all come in time.

We see how important it is to assist the immigrants. We can tell that they do need the help and that there are many ways to make them feel welcomed.